

PRESENTATION OF
THE FIFTH FERDINAND C. VALENTINE
MEDAL AND AWARD TO
THEODORE M. DAVIS*

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DR. THEODORE MCCANN DAVIS was born on December 23rd, 1889, in Greenville, S. C., where he still resides. After preliminary education in that city, he attended Furman University, worked for a while in electrical engineering, and ultimately chose medicine as a career. In 1914 he was graduated with highest honors from the School of Medicine of the University of Maryland, receiving the Faculty Gold Medal. The next year he served as resident surgeon in the University Hospital. He then became assistant and later associate to Dr. W. C. Black of Greenville, S. C. As early as 1920 he began to limit his practice to urology. Dr. Davis became interested in transurethral surgery, a technique known for a number of years but never perfected. During the next five years he studied intensively the early work of Bottini,¹ Freudenberg,² Young,³ and Caulk,⁴ and later the work of Stern.^{5, 6, 7} Ultimately Dr. Davis perfected an electromagnetic switch permitting instantaneous change from cutting to coagulating current for prostatic resection. This required modification and major innovations in instruments and allied equipment. Dr. Davis used this equipment to remove all the adenomatous portion of the prostate, not merely to carve a channel through it; this appears to have been a new conception among those considering transurethral removals. He reported the results of 246 cases at the 1931 AMA Convention in Philadelphia, Pa.⁸ The original paper had the effect of a bombshell on the urologic world—some for, most against! Undaunted by the unfavorable comments⁹ on his work, Dr. Davis continued to strive to improve the instrument and his technique. In 1935 he published the results of the operation in 748 cases.¹⁰

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Dr. Davis' ability was recognized by Reinhold Wappler, an electrical wizard and the famous founder of the American Cystoscope Makers, Inc.¹¹ In a letter dated April 27, 1931, to Dr. A. J. Crowell of the Crowell Urological Clinic in Charlotte, S. C., where Dr. Davis commuted to do part of his work, Mr. Wappler stated, "I hope to be permitted in a small way to carry out my commission of executing the mechanical details of Dr. Davis' epoch-making technique of prostatic resection. Perhaps it is the way of providence that I failed to recognize, at an early date, the advent of genius." Mr. Wappler blamed Dr. Davis' "modesty."

The operation, although then relatively safe and simple in the hands of Dr. Davis and less traumatic to the patient than an open procedure, could not be duplicated when attempted by untrained surgeons. Indeed, for surgeons not familiar with endoscopy the Davis operation was impossible—for the others it was still difficult! Also, electrical manufacturers deluged surgeons with literature on the efficacy of their particular equipment and the simplicity and safety of the operation. This led to many unfortunate results. Hence, the procedure did not achieve prompt popularity. However, time and open-minded, hard-working urologists proved that Dr. Davis' work was the basis for the final acceptance of transurethral resection as a legitimate surgical procedure. In fact, transurethral prostatectomy is a strictly urologic technique—one of the justifications for the separate speciality.

In 1937 Dr. Davis suffered a severe attack of coronary occlusion and retired from active medical life.

Dr. Davis has been honored by many offices and by membership in many learned societies. He has long been a member of the Greenville South Carolina Medical Society and served as its president in 1919. He was a member of the staff of the Greenville County Hospital and president in 1922, and for many years chief of the Urology Service. He was president of the staff of St. Francis Hospital, Greenville, in 1923. He is a member of the American Medical Association, the American Association of Genito-Urinary Surgeons, the Southern Medical Association, and is a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons. Among other learned societies, he has a membership in the Société Internationale D'Urologie and is a charter member of, and a diplomate of the American Board of Urology. He is an honorary member of the Hollywood, Florida, Academy of Medicine, and has published numerous articles on

prostatic resection.

On March 14, 1965, at a Symposium on Transurethral Surgery of the Southeastern Section of the American Urological Association, a Certificate of Merit was awarded him on the basis of his outstanding pioneer work and his many contributions to the development of transurethral surgery.

The Medical Alumni Association of the University of Maryland on June 3, 1965, recognized Dr. Davis' contribution to the field of urology, and gave him its highest honor, the Alumni Honor Award and Gold Key "for important contributions to medicine and for distinguished service to mankind."

Somewhat belatedly and, therefore, with exceptional enthusiasm and esteem, the Section on Urology of The New York Academy of Medicine recognizes the monumental contribution of Dr. Theodore McCann Davis to the specialty of urology and, more important, to the welfare of man, by presenting him with its Valentine Award for 1966.

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